

Forest Fire Smoke Impacts West Yellowstone Thursday June 28, 2007 11am

Smoke from the Madison Arm fire just outside of West Yellowstone is severely impacting the city this morning. Smoke levels started to build about midnight and have reached VERY UNHEALTHY levels as of 11 am this morning. Smoke impacts at this level are associated with significant aggravation of heart and lung disease and premature mortality in persons in a challenged health status. People with respiratory or heart problems, the very young and the elderly should avoid any outdoor activity until conditions improve and the general public should avoid prolonged exertion. Residents of the West Yellowstone area can check current conditions at the MDEQ website:

Winds are expected to increase from the southwest later today in the West Yellowstone area. The increasing winds and higher mixing heights as the day heats up should provide significant improvement in the smoke level for areas that are not immediately downwind of the active fire this afternoon. Conditions could become poor again tonight as an inversion traps the smoke and holds it close to the ground. The actual levels tonight will be a function of the fire activity levels later this afternoon and evening during the active phase of this fire. Residents of the area that do not have access to the DEQ website should use the visibility guide below to assess their situation.

Visibility Ranges Used to Determine Health Effect Categories	
Visibility Range	Health Effect Category
10 miles and up	<u>Good</u>
6 miles to 9 miles	<u>Moderate</u>
3 miles to 5 miles	<u>Unhealthy For Sensitive Groups</u>
1.5 to 2.5 miles	<u>Unhealthy</u>
0.9 to 1.4 miles	<u>Very Unhealthy</u>
0.8 miles or less	<u>Hazardous</u>

The procedure for making personal observation to determine the forest fire smoke index value for local areas without National Weather Station (NWS) or Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) monitors is:

1. Face away from the sun.
2. Determine the limit of your visible range by looking for targets at known distances (miles).
3. Visible range is that point at which even high contrast objects totally disappear.
4. Use the values above to determine the local forest fire smoke category.

More information is available at the DEQ Fire and Smoke website:
<http://www.deq.mt.gov/FireUpdates/index.asp>

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